

Message Text

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TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 281972

NODIS
FOR BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOL AMMAN 8625 SENT ACTION SECSTATE NOV 25, 1977 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 8625

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, JO, US, XF
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS

REF (A) AMMAN 8624, (B) STATE 281961

1. REFTEL (B) APPARENTLY CROSSED WITH REFTEL (A) SINCE LATTER
CONTAINS NO REFERENCE TO FORMER AND AMMAN TEL BEGINS TO FILL
PART OF REQUEST FROM DEPARTMENT. OBVIOUSLY THERE IS A GOOD
DEAL MORE THAT WE BOTH WOULD WISH TO HAVE FROM HUSSEIN. SINCE
HE IS PLANNING TO BE BACK IN AMMAN FROM AQABAH ON THE AFTERNOON
OF NOVEMBER 26TH, I WILL ATTEMPT TO BE IN TOUCH WITH HIM THEN.
IT WOULD HELP GREATLY IN HIS OWN THINKING IF WE COULD PROVIDE
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HIM SOMETHING FURTHER ON THE VIEWS IN EGYPT AND ISRAEL IN
PARTICULAR IN THE SENSE OF HIS TELEPHONE CALL TO ME NOVEMBER
24 (PARA 4 REFTEL A).

2. AT THIS POINT, TWO THINGS ARE CLEAR WHICH COULD BE OF GREAT
CONSEQUENCE IN THE JORDANIAN POSITION: (A) THE KING HAS SWUNG
MORE FAVORABLY TOWARD EGYPT THAN HE WAS WHEN I SAW HIM
NOVEMBER 20; AND (B) AS A RESULT, JORDANIAN SYRIAN RELATIONS
COULD CHANGE EVEN MORE MARKEDLY IN A NEGATIVE DIRECTION THAN
THEY HAVE UP UNTIL NOW. CLEARLY THE SADAT INITIATIVE HAS MASSIVE

POTENTIAL FOR RE-POLARIZING THE ARAB WORLD, WITH SYRIA ATTEMPTING TO FORM OR JOIN A RADICAL GROUP WHICH WILL INCLUDE ALGERIA, LIBYA AND PERHAPS EVEN IRAQ. THE EGYPTIANS ON THE OTHER HAND WILL HAVE TO STRUGGLE TO KEEP WITH THEM SAUDI ARABIA AND A FEW OTHERS LIKE SUDAN AND THE GULF STATES. JORDAN IS AS USUAL IN THE MIDDLE AND THE KING'S TILT NOW IS SURPRISINGLY TOWARD EGYPT, ALTHOUGH I WOULD AT THIS POINT WISH TO BE GUARDED ABOUT HOW FAR AND HOW FAST HE WILL MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION.

3. FOR JORDAN, AND INDEED FOR US, THERE REMAINS THE IMPORTANT QUESTION OF HOW FAR WE CAN REALLY HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THIS PROCESS OF REPOLARIZATION. GENEVA WITHOUT SYRIA WOULD BE THE END POINT OF THIS STAGE OF REPOLARIZATION, BUT IN A LARGER SENSE, ALSO IT WOULD BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PHASE OF INTER-ARAB SQUABBLING. THE SOVIETS HAVE SEEN THIS CLEARLY GIVEN THEIR ANTI-SADAT PRESS OUTPUT, AND WELL COULD FIND IN THIS DEVELOPMENT AN OPENING TO REINSERT THEMSELVES ONCE MORE AS A SIGNIFICANT POWER ON THE GROUND IN MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS BY SPONSORING, SUPPORTING, AND COUNSELING THE POTENTIALLY EMERGING RADICAL BLOC.

4. SUBJECT TO FURTHER TALKS WITH THE KING, MY IMPRESSION IS
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THAT HE NOW BELIEVES IT IS NECESSARY TO FIND SOME WAY OF TRYING TO HEAL THE WOUND, BUT THAT THIS MAY TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND SERVE ALSO TO POSTPONE GENEVA. A KEY FACTOR WILL BE WHETHER THERE HAS INDEED BEEN ANY SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WHICH CAN BE USED ULTIMATELY TO BREAK DOWN SYRIAN HOSTILITY. WE ASSUME HERE TOO THAT ARGUMENTS THAT SYRIA IS ACTUALLY NOW FORCING SADAT TO MOVE OUT ALONE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS MAY HAVE SOME EFFECT IN DAMASCUS. FINALLY, WHILE KING MAY BE TORN, IN EVENT HE SHOULD RECEIVE A REAL INVITATION, ABOUT GOING HIMSELF TO JERUSALEM, FACT THAT ISRAELIS ARE SO INFLEXIBLE ON WEST BANK TERRITORY WILL WEIGH HEAVILY AND NEGATIVELY IN THE BALANCE. EGYPTIAN SUPPORT WOULD BE CRUCIAL, SINCE EGYPT WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN SETTING UP PLO AT RABAT AS "SOLE, LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE" OF PALESTINIANS, A POSITION KING WOULD APPEAR TO BE BREAKING IF HE WENT TO TALK TO BEGIN.

5. JORDANIANS, IN SPITE OF THEIR CHANGE OF HEART OVER THE EGYPTIAN VISIT, WILL BE WARY AT THIS POINT OF RISKING A BORDER CLOSURE WITH SYRIA AND INCREASED IRAQI HOSTILITY OVER ESSENTIALLY EPHEMERAL PROBLEMS FOR THEM INVOLVED IN THE EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN DISPUTE. FINALLY, THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE OF TALK ABOUT THE KING FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT UNDER RIFAI FOR THE DAYS AHEAD. WHILE WE SEE NO REAL EVIDENCE YET OF HIS THINKING IN THIS REGARD, AND AT FIRST BLUSH IT IS RATHER AN UNUSUAL IDEA TO PUT BACK INTO POWER THE ARCHTECT OF CLOSER JORDANIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS AT THE TIME SUCH ARE BREAKING APART, IT MIGHT AT THE OUTSIDE BE A WAY TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION. RIFAI AND HIS

FAMILY HAVE BEEN BAD MOUTHING ALL OVER TOWN THE SADAT TRIP,
AND WOULD NOT LIKELY SERVE IN PRESENT SITUATION WITHOUT SOME
UNDERSTANDING FROM KING ON A RATHER FREE HAND TO PATCH THINGS
UP, SOMETHING WE DO NOT SEE HUSSEIN GIVING. BUT WE DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE KING'S POWER TO "PERSUADE" RIFAI.

6. ALL OF THE ABOVE IS OF NECESSITY A VERY PRELIMINARY ASSESS-
MENT BASED ON THE EVIDENCE WE HAVE AT HAND AND SHOULD BE
CORRECTABLE IN LIGHT OF A FURTHER TALK WITH THE KING. WHILE
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WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANY REPORTS OF SADAT'S AND BEGIN'S OWN
REACTIONS AND IDEAS ON THE VISIT, SOMETHING FROM US ALONG
THESE LINES WILL BE A NEAR NECESSITY WITH HUSSEIN IF WE ARE
TO GET AN ADEQUATE REFLECTION FROM HIM WHEN I SEE HIM NEXT
ON HIS VIEWS OF WHAT LIES AHEAD.

7. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT TO CAIRO, DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV.
PICKERING UNQUOTE VANCE

SECRET

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